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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8352
INFO RUEHXS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2395
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAHLA/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 006039

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, G/TIP, EAP/MLS, EAP/RSP
DEPT ALSO FOR EAP/PD, INL, DRL/IL, DRL/CRA
DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS USAID FOR ANE/TS - L. SAULS
LABOR FOR ILAB

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KWMN](#) [ELAB](#) [KCRM](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: TIP: TWO MORE TRAFFICKERS SENTENCED TO LIFE
IMPRISONMENT UNDER ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING LAW

REF: A. MANILA 5781

[B](#). MANILA 5710

[C](#). MANILA 5633

[D](#). MANILA 5373

[E](#). MANILA 5326

[F](#). MANILA 4984

[1](#). (U) Summary: On December 27, a court in Metro Manila sentenced a husband and wife to life imprisonment for peddling victims -- including some minors -- into sexual servitude. A top GRP prosecutor (and former IVP grantee) spearheaded the government's legal team that netted the convictions. The latest convictions -- the third and fourth under the GRP's anti-trafficking law -- are a welcome development, but more progress is needed on the prosecutorial front. End Summary.

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TIP Convictions in Quezon City
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[2](#). (U) On December 27, the 86th Regional Trial Court in Quezon City, Metro Manila, sentenced a husband and wife to four terms of life imprisonment and fined them 8 million pesos (roughly USD 150,000) for violating the Philippines' 2003 anti-trafficking law (Republic Act 9208). The trial judge signed the decision on December 8, but it was only officially promulgated on December 27 (it is not clear why the official notification of the decision was delayed). The court also ordered the accused to pay 50,000 pesos (about USD 940) for "moral and exemplary damages plus court costs" to each of the four complainants in the case. The judge found the couple guilty on four counts of "qualified" trafficking under R.A. 9208, each of which carries a sentence of life imprisonment. (Note: Under R.A. 9208, cases involving criminal syndicates or the trafficking of minors are categorized as "qualified trafficking," which carries a stiffer penalty. End Note.) The two convicted traffickers are planning to appeal.

[3](#). (U) According to the court's December 8 ruling, the husband and wife team (both Filipino nationals) recruited 25 women -- including at least three minors -- in Cebu in the Visayan region of the central Philippines with promises of acting jobs in Manila. Once the victims were in the custody of the accused, they were repeatedly peddled to high-paying customers for sexual services between November 2002 and January 2004. On January 8, 2004, agents of the

GRP's National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Violence Against Women and Children Division arrested the couple in a sting operation at a Quezon City hotel where the traffickers delivered several girls to agents posing as "johns." The NBI treated the adult prostitutes picked up in the operation as victims and did not charge them with any crimes. Officials also turned the minors involved over to the custody of the Department of Social Welfare and Development for rehabilitation and counseling.

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A Committed Prosecutor
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¶4. (U) Senior State Prosecutor Lilian Alejo flagged this case (then in the immediate pre-verdict stage) as a promising example of the progress the GRP was making in going after traffickers during a December 6 meeting with G/TIP Director Ambassador John R. Miller in Manila. Alejo, who filed the case in January 2004 (the first prosecution brought under R.A. 9208), has been a leader within the Philippine government in implementing the anti-trafficking law. She was an International Visitor Program (IVP) grantee in 2005 under the program, "Combating International Crime Through Global Cooperation." Alejo has also trained other prosecutors and police in how to pursue TIP cases as part of a USG-funded project (ref F).

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Comment: A Welcome Development
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¶5. (U) The Quezon City convictions are a welcome

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development, but more progress is needed on the prosecutorial front. These latest convictions come less than a month after the first major convictions under the 2003 anti-trafficking law (ref b). Chief State Prosecutor Severino Gana told poloff on December 27 that he believes the increased resources the GRP has newly devoted to prosecuting TIP cases are starting to pay off. Gana and other officials predict that additional convictions will take place in the first quarter of 2006.

JONES